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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 PARIS 008689

SIPDIS

STATE FOR ECA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [OEXC](#) [SCUL](#) [FR](#)

SUBJECT: REINVIGORATING PUBLIC DIPLOMACY CULTURAL AND SPORTS PROGRAMS - THE PERSPECTIVE FROM FRANCE

1. Mission France is pleased to have the opportunity to provide an overview of those cultural programs that best support our MPP goals and objectives. While France - and Paris in particular - is center to the cultural world, hosting thousands of these events each year without our involvement, there remains an important role for the USG to play. Our sponsorship of U.S. music, dance, sports and some visual arts programs is a highly effective way for us to convey positive images of our society, break down stereotypes and create a favorable climate in which substantive policy discussions can take place. With resources (financial and personnel) at an all time low, our ability to hone in on key programs is essential to the success of our overall strategy.

2. Question A. Which of your mission objectives benefits from cultural programs or could be better supported by cultural programs, including sports programs?

All of our MPP goals and objectives are well served and benefit from our cultural programs. While our activities are more directly linked to the MPP goal of "improving international public opinion of the U.S.", they also serve as a foundation for achieving other mission objectives such as "prevention and response to terrorism", "close ties with allies and friends", "multilateral agreements", and "trade and investment." It is no secret that since our engagement in Iraq in early 2003, our interactions in the world arena have had negative consequences for our image, particularly in France. The French public now generally questions our honesty and our commitment to democratic values and principles. The right cultural programs can directly counter these negative opinions by presenting positive aspects of the U.S. and demonstrating that our country is an open, just, and fertile society where creativity and personal initiative and effort are encouraged and rewarded. Our diversity and our respect for other cultures and religions can also be highlighted, particularly among audiences normally inaccessible to us. Indirectly, cultural programs also create a more propitious environment for engaging our interlocutors on issues of U.S. policy and help foreign governments obtain the voter support they need to cooperate with us.

3. B. What kind of specific cultural or sports programs or initiatives are, or would be, most effective in supporting these objectives?

-- Music and dance performances and festivals are by far the most effective way for us to reach out to the French public: they showcase U.S. talent; elicit positive emotional group responses (at the end of the Preservation Hall Jazz Band concert every member of the audience was standing, clapping and dancing); surmount obstacles posed by language thus enabling us to reach a public not normally accessible through other programs (i.e., theatre or speaker programs); and generate long-term goodwill towards the U.S. Because music and dance performances programs are very expensive (transportation of artists and instruments, hall rental, lodging, etc.) and time consuming in their organization, the wisest investment generally speaking, is the program that provides the broadest appeal. These would be the more 'popular' performances designed to appeal to a younger, diverse audience and to underscore U.S. democratic values, such as jazz, blues, modern dance, rap (in contrast with 'elite' programs for a reduced audience intended to dispel the stereotype of the U.S. as fostering 'trash' or 'mass' culture (e.g., opera, classic ballet.) Clearly, performances that can combine the two objectives and audiences, such as the Jazz Ambassadors or Preservation Hall Jazz Band, provide the best avenue for outreach. If the performers are also willing to participate in other outreach outside the official cadre of their performance, such as master classes (such as the artists in the Blues-Sur-Seine Festival), then we have a truly well rounded and effective cultural program.

-- Festivals are very popular in France and another excellent vehicle for outreach as they gather a broad spectrum of public over a period of several days and give us great visibility. They can be limited to one genre (music, dance, film) or incorporate various genres. Post regrets that the Festival Fund Grants Program is no longer available. It was very successful in France and provided access to an additional source of funding.

-- Sports programs are also an extremely effective way to reach out to all types of French audiences without language barriers. Basketball is by far the most popular of US sports here, and American basketball teams and players are well known

by French fans, who are often very diverse in their backgrounds, ranging from the elite to the lower socio-economic classes. French players in the NBA are idolized in France. Our basketball athletes can be excellent US ambassadors and role models to young audiences, and would be particularly valuable in our collaboration with schools and community or civic associations working with disadvantaged youth in urban areas.

Because some professional athletes also associate themselves with a cause or charity, they can help us highlight American civic involvement and our extensive private charitable contributions to other countries. Despite the controversy generated by the media regarding his suspected drug use, Lance Armstrong's successive victories in the Tour de France and his association with the fight against cancer were an excellent way to showcase our country. Other sports, such as tennis, while more 'elitist' in image, are very popular and worth exploring.

-- Visual Arts programs can also work well in France. The French love photography and professional exhibits that represent American landscapes (natural or urban) draw a substantial crowd from both upper and middle classes. The Ground Zero photo exhibit, which was a more modest 'home-grown' version of a full professional exhibit, attracted large crowds because of its historic and emotional content. Paper shows, because they are a bit 'light' in terms of their artistic appeal, do not stand on their own as well. They therefore work best when keyed for thematic content ('Earth Day' or even '60th Anniversary Commemoration of the UN' will elicit considerably less interest than 'Rosa Parks' and other civil rights commemorative paper shows.) Because of their relative cost and lighter weight, they are much more affordable to posts and more practical for transportation and lending purposes to smaller institutions, libraries and schools, which are all eager consumers.

-- Institution-to-Institution Exchanges and partnerships such as IPAM (International Partnership Among Museums) can be excellent vehicles for creating strong links between France and the United States. They also help establish professional networks while helping to giving the French greater access to lesser known regions of the U.S. Sister Cities have developed museum partnerships, artist and student exchanges, and other programs that increase tourism and encourage a positive attitude towards the U.S., particularly among young people. Unfortunately, the success of these programs is completely dependent on the will and financial capabilities of each side of the partnership. If one partner is less involved than the other frustration sets in and the Mission finds itself called upon to fill in for that partner, a role we are unable to take.

-- Film can be a good vehicle of communication but we are much more constrained in this case by language and by the message conveyed by the film. It is often difficult to find American films that do not portray the U.S. or some aspect of our society/culture in a negative light. In addition, the offerings in France are so overwhelming and our 'value added' so negligible that we have a hard time attracting distributors for screenings. We can and do, of course, associate ourselves with the Deauville American film Festival.

-- Videos can be more useful than films in terms of outreach. While they have the same language constraints, because they are provided by the Department their message about the U.S. has already been determined to be positive. In addition, they are more practical to use and can be loaned regularly to schools where English is taught. Like paper shows, they are most valuable when combined with a speaker program.

-- Theater is a more complicated endeavor, as it generally involves greater expense and organization. In addition, a language barrier usually exists, so we risk limiting our audience to English speakers who are already 'US-friendly.' The returns on investment are much less than for other programs listed above, though this does not mean that we should not associate ourselves with the right program when it comes to our attention.

14. C. What constraints does your Mission face in effectively utilizing cultural, arts, and sports programs? Are there art forms, sports or cultural expressions that do not engage audiences in your country? Are there other constraints that limit the effectiveness of these kinds of programs in your country? Do you face internal staffing or funding constraints? -- Our greatest constraint is 'resources,' both in terms of funding and staffing. Cultural programming in France, particularly the type that draws large audiences, is extremely expensive. Post simply does not have the budget that permits it to organize these programs on a regular basis and still maintain support for other PD programs such as speakers, education, civil society and alumni programs, also key elements of our outreach strategy.

Because France attracts so much interest in and of its own, we are also faced with competition from outside entities (both from the private sector and from other government institutions such as UNESCO, World Monuments Fund, alumni groups, etc.) which call on us to provide funding and/or staffing in order to organize events during the year.

Mission France consists of not only Paris but also our two Consulates General (CGs) and five American Presence Posts

(APPs). These seven satellite posts are very well keyed in to the needs and interests of the populations in their area and propose a number of excellent cultural programs. They must compete with Paris for funding.

The USG budget cycle makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to fund projects taking place in the early fall or beginning of our fiscal year. We must therefore turn down a number of projects that take place in that period of the year. Staffing is also a significant constraint. There are only two American officers sharing all aspects of programming in the cultural section and only one Foreign Service National for Arts & Entertainment (Sports falls within the portfolio of another FSN who must also meet the responsibilities of an increasingly demanding education portfolio). In addition to organizing planned events, staff must respond to numerous other demands, including invitations to the Ambassador for sponsorship or participation in external events, review and requests for grants, drafting of briefing memoranda and remarks/speeches for front office participation, representation, translation, and clerical support. The official French 35 hour workweek also limits us and means that work handled outside of these normal hours (including the number of official events taking place in the evening) must be compensated by comp-time off later on. The APPs and CGs are also limited in their staffing.

-- Language is a handicap for some of the programs, whether the language is English or Arabic. French is the common language for all socio-economic and ethnic groups. Only those French individuals with special knowledge of the U.S. and/or thematic interests (foreign policy or American Studies) can take advantage of English-language programs. Arabic is rarely used.

-- Direct references to religion in programming (such as religious Muslim musical groups) are not appealing to French audiences which are mostly secular (even when they are of Arab or Muslim extraction). The only religious offerings that have traditionally appealed to the French have been musical Gospel groups, though in this case religion is considered to be collateral to the musical entertainment.

-- Direct references to political or policy messages (as in some film and video offers) come across as 'propaganda' and undermine our attempts to draw audiences towards us through cultural events so that groundwork may be laid for a subsequent substantive discussion. More often than not, they create a negative backlash.

-- We often decline participation in film or music festivals due to the presence of one film or artist whose message about the U.S. or one aspect of our culture or society is negative (e.g. a film about the death penalty in a two-day film festival organized by one of Paris' city halls.)

-- France does not rely on our offer for cultural programming to plan events. Therefore, most cultural institutions and venues - even those in the provinces - book their programming a long time in advance and are not always available for our programs. They have the luxury of picking and choosing so offers from Washington, which generally arrive months or weeks prior to the intended performance date, cannot be placed, or are placed in less than optimum fora. With some rare exceptions we normally need to work with at least one year of notice for major events.

-- Offers from Washington that require us to name the U.S. performer (particularly those musical or dance groups appealing to younger, more diverse public) can be very difficult for post to respond to. This is particularly so when dealing with relatively new artists appealing to younger crowds (hip-hop, rap, etc.). As with speakers, our knowledge of who may be willing to travel to France and perform at USG rates is minimal. In addition, there is the concern of 'message.'

15. D. How have you been able to partner with the private sector in your country to sponsor cultural/sports events, or to overcome resource (staff and funding) constraints? In the past, post has already partnered with other entities (Franco-American friendship groups, city halls, independent associations, museums, sports organizations, etc.) as a relatively simple and inexpensive way to take advantage of an association with events already underway. This partnership has taken the form of partial funding for programs via grants and the patronage or presence of our Ambassador at an event. While these partnerships are more often than not 'minimal' or 'symbolic' in terms of our contributions, they are nevertheless an important component of our engagement in France. (In the case of one of the most successful festivals and points of outreach for Muslim and disadvantaged youth in France, the Blues-sur-Seine Festival which costs about 750,000 USD to mount, our contribution consisted of 5,000 USD This is an equivalent amount to what we pay to bring a speaker for presentations to elite groups.)

We continue this type of collaboration but have also more recently begun exploring partnerships with the private sector in order to obtain sufficient funds to organize special events (other than the Fourth of July events for which private donations have already been 'de rigueur.') The complexity of regulations and ethical limitations to these collaborations as well as our relative inexperience in this area make it necessary for us to proceed with caution. In the case of the

recent Preservation Hall Jazz Band program in France, for example, post reached out to French subsidiaries of American companies for funding and obtained promises from two. To date, these funds have not been made available to us. Nevertheless, we are convinced that these types of partnerships are the way of the future and will continue to pursue them. This is an avenue to not only obtaining necessary funding, but also creating awareness among private enterprises of the importance of cultural outreach in enhancing the U.S. image overseas.

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